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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ROME 000148

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SUBJECT: ITALY AND ISAF: NO NEW DEPLOYMENTS IN NEAR TERM,
BUT MORE MILITARY AND POLICE TRAINING POSSIBLE

REF: A. ROME DAILY REPORT 1/30/08

- [1B.](#) ROME 118
- [1C.](#) ROME 133
- [1D.](#) ROME 71
- [1E.](#) PARIS 163

Classified By: Acting Political Minister-Counselor Jonathan Cohen for Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

[¶11.](#) (C) Summary: With the current political crisis likely to drag on for months, and a caretaker government prohibited from making significant policy changes, we see no prospect for new large-scale Italian military commitments in Afghanistan between now and the summer. However, GOI officials are considering small, targeted increases in Afghan police and military training which may still be achievable in the short to mid-term. The Italian military, though committed to ISAF, has said repeatedly that it has reached the limits of its overseas deployment capability (approximately 9,000 troops globally). GOI officials would like to plus-up the 1,300-strong Italian contingent in Regional Command-West by moving troops there from Kabul, where Italy currently holds the rotating command and has 1,200 troops. Italy can only do so, however, if France or another ISAF partner agrees to take over some of the Italian commitment in Kabul after its command rotation ends in August [¶2008](#). In the run-up to Bucharest and the weeks thereafter, we should encourage Italy to undertake low-profile, high-impact measures already under consideration, including new OMLTs and Carabinieri/border police training programs. End Summary.

Government Preoccupied with Domestic Concerns, but Still Committed to ISAF

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[¶12.](#) (C) President Napolitano signed a GOI decree renewing through 2008 Italian civil and military missions overseas, including Afghanistan, on February 1. Parliament will either approve the decree by April 1 or the caretaker government will extend the decree by 60-day increments until a Parliament can vote it into law (Ref A). The Italian political crisis may go on for weeks or months and will likely culminate in elections sometime between April and June (Ref B, C). Until a newly elected government is in place,

there will be no major policy changes, including troop levels and caveats in Afghanistan.

¶3. (C/NF) As recently as January 15, during a meeting with the Ambassador, FM D'Alema ruled out new troop commitments in Afghanistan (while acknowledging that ISAF needs more troops) (Ref D). While a new government may be more amenable to increasing troop levels, for the next six months Italy is likely to focus on civil reconstruction and economic aid. MFA Officials told us on January 16 that Italian aid disbursements to Afghanistan in 2008 are projected to increase by 10 per cent to Euro 60 million. On the military side, GOI officials continue to maintain that Italy, with approximately 9,000 troops abroad, is at the political, budgetary and statutory limits of its worldwide deployment capability; any new deployments must, they say, be weighed against the possibility of additional demands in the Balkans and Lebanon. However, working-level officials are exploring possibilities for small, targeted increases in police and military training in Afghanistan, as well as a possible concentration of Italian forces in RC-West, where Italy holds overall command and operates a PRT (Herat).

Italy Wants to Concentrate Forces in West

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¶4. (C) GOI officials tell us that they are worried about the ability of their 1,300 troops in RC-West to handle the increase in Taliban activity in the area, particularly as more Taliban militants are pushed out of RC-South. They would prefer to consolidate their troops, currently spread between Kabul and Herat, into RC-West. The Italians are quietly lobbying the French and the Turks (with whom they

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share the rotating command of RC-Capital) -- as well as other ISAF partners -- to take over the Italian commitment in Kabul. Under this scenario, the Italians would, at the end of their current command rotation (August 2008), move the bulk of the 1,200 troops in Kabul to RC-West to strengthen the Quick Reaction Force and other units. If this happens, Italian officials tell us, Italy would be able to assume a more active role in patrolling the region, maintaining security, intercepting clandestine arms shipments from Iran, and training Afghan military and police units. (Note: The Italians may have difficulty securing Allied support for this plan, now that French officials appear to be looking to move troops out of Kabul as well (Ref E)).

¶5. (C) Italy deployed a new Operational Mentor Liaison Team (OMLT) to RC-West in December 2007, Italy's fourth OMLT. Discussions are ongoing for a possible fifth OMLT to be deployed by the Bucharest Summit. MOD and MFA officials are also discussing the possibility of expanding the Italian Financial Police (Guardia di Finanza) training program for the Afghan Border Police in Herat, as well as the Carabinieri (Italian National Paramilitary Police) training programs for the Afghan National Police (ANP) and Elite Paramilitary Police (ANCOP), also in Herat. If realized, this would entail a doubling or tripling of the 30 or so Italian police trainers currently in Afghanistan. At the working level there is interest in expanding these training missions, but lack of high-level political will (and for now, political actors) and concerns over force protection may impede these efforts.

Military Training: The Missing Fifth OMLT

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¶6. (C) At one point last fall Italy held out the possibility of a fifth or even a sixth OMLT for Herat and/or Farah, an offer that has been on and off the table ever since. The key issue holding up the decision, according to MFA officials, is the hope that an agreement can be reached with the French or the Turks over RC-Capital, but they acknowledge that Allied pressure might induce them to provide the OMLT regardless.

Police Training: Italy's Niche Market, But Where are the Carabinieri?

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¶17. (C) Italy's Carabinieri and Financial Police (Guardia di Finanza) have a great deal of international police training experience, yet their presence in Afghanistan is still fairly modest (about 30 officers). 20 Guardia di Finanza (GdF) officers run a bilateral Border Police training program in Herat that has earned high marks from Embassy Kabul. The GdF have committed to training 1,300 Border Police by August 2008, and U.S. officials have encouraged them to renew the program after that date and to extend it to the U.S.-run training facility at Islam Qala (Afghanistan's busiest border crossing with Iran) to train customs police. MFA officials have told us that the GdF are hesitant to expand the mission out of fear of becoming logistically and budgetarily overextended (this is the GdF's only training mission outside of Europe), and due to force protection concerns (Islam Qala is 100 km west of Herat).

¶18. (C) The Carabinieri are world leaders in gendarme-style police training. However, they have only a small presence in the EUPOL police training program: a team of six officers attached to the Italian PRT in Herat act as mentors to the ANP provincial headquarters, and two Carabinieri and two GdF officers are attached to EUPOL headquarters in Kabul. Embassy Kabul reports, however, that their impact is limited due to their small size and limited mandate. Meanwhile, the Afghan version of a national gendarmerie, the Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP), remains in great need of training and institutional development. Because the U.S. lacks its own gendarme tradition, INL and U.S. military police training programs do not incorporate training in gendarme-type skills most relevant to ANCOP. So far Italy and other European countries with gendarme forces have not stepped up to fill

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this need.

¶19. (C) The Carabinieri sent a lieutenant-commanded squad of 20 Trainers to the U.S.-run Herat Regional Training Center for three months in late 2007 to help train ANCOP in collaboration with U.S. trainers. However, those Carabinieri merely supported U.S. trainers and did not offer training specific to gendarme-style police. Carabinieri officials told Poloff that ANCOP invited the Carabinieri to lead the training program at the new ANCOP Academy in Adraskan, 70 km south of Herat, but that the site's remoteness would require a contingent of Carabinieri paratroopers for force protection. An MFA Official subsequently told Poloff that a recommendation had been made at the interagency working level to accept the invitation, but a political-level decision had not yet been made.

Comment

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¶110. (C) Working-level Italian officials recognize that Italy can do more in the area of military and police training, but their superiors are subject to budgetary, statutory and, at the moment, severe political constraints. Continued high-level engagement in Rome, Washington and Brussels will be key to overcoming these concerns and securing Italian contributions in the areas where they are needed most. Our expectations should be modest at least until there is a new Italian government in office.

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